

*[Ted Goerner]*  
*Before the*  
*Appropriations Committee Hearing*  
*On Governor's Proposed Budget Affecting Education*

*[March 3, 2015]*

Good evening Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Ted Goerner. I am testifying before you today as someone who has been quadruply impacted by the frozen ECS formula. I come to you today as a West Hartford resident and taxpayer, a West Hartford parent, a West Hartford teacher, and a state taxpayer.

It is my understanding that West Hartford has been significantly underfunded by ECS for many years and is currently the 4<sup>th</sup> most underfunded town in the state. This year we will receive 30 million dollars less from the state than what we would receive if the formula had been updated to reflect our changing demographics in West Hartford. Over the course of the last 19 years, we have missed out on about 300 million dollars.

What this means as a West Hartford resident and taxpayer is that this year I will again be paying about \$9000 in local property taxes, most of that will be going to the school system, and about \$1,500 of that is a direct result of underfunding due to a broken ECS formula.

What that means as a West Hartford parent is that my son has attended an elementary school that, although it is staffed from top to bottom with excellent teachers and administrators, could have been better. Maybe it could have been air conditioned. Maybe there could have been a para-educator employed to assist the class when his teacher administered one on one progress monitoring tests, or help to input all of the data that elementary teachers are required to report. Maybe there could have been more state of the art technology, guest speakers, and fabulous field trips. We will never know.

What this means as a West Hartford teacher is that I, like my colleagues, will be working with an increasingly diverse and challenging student body. We will continue to teach every student who walks through the door regardless of their socioeconomic status, their English language abilities, their computational skills, or their level of support from home. We will continue to offer an incredible range of classes including music, art, science in starting in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, world languages, and tech ed. We will keep our standardized test scores high...some of our scores, are the highest they have ever been.

An additional impact of inadequate funding is on staffing. At the middle school for example, as soon as we experience even a slight dip in student population for a grade level, teams are rearranged so that we have 2 ½ teams for that grade as opposed to the typical three full teams. This leads to disruption and distortion of the team concept. In addition to all of this, my

colleagues and I will continue to satisfy new and sometimes burdensome state mandates related to teacher evaluation. We will do all of this, and do it well in spite of the fact that our salaries and benefits have slipped over the years in comparison to neighboring towns. We will continue to do more and more with less and less. But this is not fair and cannot continue indefinitely.

What this means as a state taxpayer is that I will have to live with the knowledge that some of the money that I gave to the state in previous years has gone into the pockets of dishonest charter school operators. Jumoke Academy may be the most extreme example of lack of oversight that has occurred this year, but I fear that there is a larger, more subtle fleecing going on all over this country by some charter management organizations. We need more accountability and transparency of where and how our state tax dollars are being spent on education and if charter and magnet schools get the same return on investment as our neighborhood public schools.

The current ECS system is not working. Eventually, systems that are chronically underfunded will break down. The time to fix the broken ECS funding formula is now. I would call upon all of the other towns in this state that are being short changed to take a stand. I fully support **SB 816**, the bill being presented by Senator Bye, which would require that no town receive less than 50% of their fair allotment from the state. What's right is right and what's fair is fair.

Respectfully submitted,

Ted Goerner